

THE BEDOUIN OF THE DESERT 33

756 father," I said, "I have no medicine that will do the boy
866 any good."

It was easy to see that the reply was not entirely unexpected, but already I talked to a different man. "Is there perhaps some operation you can perform for him?" asked the old man slowly and gravely. "We have heard that you do many marvelous things by means of the knife."

"My father, it is quite true that we operate here on many people and use the knife a great deal, but there is no operation that will do him any good either."

"Then," said the father, "will he die?"

"Yes, he will die. He has only a few days or months at the outside. No doctor can do him any good. He is in the hands of God."

"Yes," said the old man quietly. "Praise the Lord anyway," and he turned to leave, a bent and pitiful old man. The light had died out of his eyes, and the spring had gone from his steps; he was the picture of broken grief, but there was not a tear nor a complaint, nor did his steady eyes waver as he looked straight into my own. We tried to get him to stay for a few days and rest before starting on the return journey, but his reply was simple and final. "No," he said, "we appreciate your hospitality, but the boy would rather die in his own country with his mother."

573 By far the most beautiful family life in Arabia is found
[67] among the Bedouins. Poverty enforces a monogamy which their religion does not require, and as might be expected, divorce is less common and the whole atmosphere of society infinitely cleaner than in other Arab communities. Often a family life is found that is very beautiful. The loyalty of the various members of such

Penalty of Seduction Ma'adan

Chap. VIII

837 Again, as in the desert, immorality is practically unknown among
 674 unmarried girls. Married women on the contrary often indulge in clandestine intrigue. The penalty for immorality is death to the woman if she is found out. The woman's brothers and cousins always appear more concerned about their sister's honour than the father is, and if vengeance is to be carried out it is usually the brothers and cousins who track the woman down. As excuse they plead that they could not hold their heads up in tribal *majlis* if they had a sister living in dishonour. Marriage with the man who has led her away is the only method that will save the girl's life. Even then the seducer must pay *Asām* or honour-money to satisfy the girl's relatives. A stranger man sometimes takes the place of the seducer and can get the girl off punishment by marrying her, but this is not common. *Faḍl* or '*idiyah*' is the term given to blood money. Among the Iraq *Ma'adan* (marsh) tribes a girl-relative of a murderer is nearly always given to the brother or son of the murdered person, the idea being that a child from the union of two enemy houses allays any hatred that might remain.

595 Among the Arab tribes of Iraq, as opposed to the *Ma'adan* (marsh-men), a man sets up a special tent or mat shelter called a *haufa* for his wife to be taken to immediately after marriage. This is close to his house or tent as the case may be, and corresponds to a honeymoon tent. After the bride is taken to this *haufa* by her women, the husband, arrayed in his best garments, is conveyed there by his men friends and consummates the marriage. The woman remains a prisoner in the *haufa* for seven days. The man, on the contrary, may come out and receive visitors in his *mudif* or nearby guest-tent. On the eighth day the woman comes out of her *haufa*, goes into her new home and takes charge of the household duties. The custom of setting up the *haufa* tent applies only if the girl has never been married before. If she be a widow she goes straight to her husband's tent.

LOVE

831 I have often been asked if love, as we know it, exists among the
 595 Badawin. I have unhesitatingly replied that it does. The fact that a man is permitted to take more than a single wife has nothing to do with the matter. Indeed, it is rare to see a Badawin with more than

Badawin Love

Chap. VIII

one wife. He simply cannot afford such luxury. The majority marry, ⁵³¹ of course, two or three times in their lives, either because the wife ⁶¹⁵ has a temper, is lary, is unreasonable, cannot have children, or gets sick and dies; but I have known a large number who have been faithful to one woman all their lives and regard the woman of their choice with affection and trust, even when she is old and decrepit. This proves constancy at any rate, which is not far removed from love.

In spite of their religion permitting men to take more than one wife, and in spite of easy and sensible divorce laws, the standard of morality among the dwellers in hair tents is one of the highest in the world: this naturally tends towards a high standard in family life, and ^[593] results in mutual admiration, companionship and trust between man and wife.

A Badawin marries primarily because he wants a helpmeet: some- ⁶⁸¹ one to cook for him, to look after, mend and renew his tent. He must have someone to prepare his *lades*, to collect his firewood and to draw water for him and his camels. Above all, he must have children, and is only half a man until he has. Nevertheless, though he looks to the woman to be useful before everything else, there is always room for love and affection. Many cases of youths and maidens falling in love, and almost going crazy about each other, have come under my notice. It would take too long to relate them all. I shall confine myself to two. Both are stories of love gone wrong, of everything eventually coming right, and the parties living happily ever afterwards. From these examples my readers must form their own conclusions, and decide whether the desert man differs greatly from his Western brother. In both cases I knew the young actors intimately.

(a) *The love-story of Mutug ibn Majid al Asa of the Al Shupair section of the Mutair.*

Young Mutug was a shalkh's son of eighteen, well bred, good-looking, debonair, wiry and with a pair of long plaits (*gurus*) hanging down along both cheeks, that might have been the envy of any woman. He was an extraordinarily bright and happy lad, and on the last occasion when he came up to Kuwait, he had asked to be shown all over my house. His remark when he saw my wife's and my bedroom was characteristic, "*Wallah*" (by God) he said, "this sleeping

Origin of the Sulubba

Chap. XII

545 In cast of countenance they would appear to be definitely non-
645 Arab, and have none of the pronounced Semitic features of the latter.

[542] In areas like Kuwait and Zubair, where they always maintain a
[541] large permanent camp outside the city walls, they are sometimes
taken by Europeans for ordinary Bedawin. This is a bad mistake and
leads at times to awkward situations.

552 No Arab can marry a Sulubba girl. He would be killed by his
● 545 people if he did, and she also. Nevertheless, I have heard it said that
the Amir Fawaz of the Ruwala has no compunction in taking a pretty
Sulubba maiden into the desert and keeping her as his mistress. For
this he is roundly cursed by all good Bedawin.

622 Most Sulubba settlements have their headmen, but where they are
545 in strength among the major tribes of Arabia they have their shaikhs,
619 some of whom own large flocks and herds of camels and are up to a
point highly respected.

For instance:

Shaikh Hamad ibn Shamut is the Shaikh of the Murair Sulubba.
Shaikh Musallij al Safi is the Shaikh of the Shammar Sulubba.
Shaikh Muhammad ibn Jilal is the Shaikh of the Amarat Sulubba.
Shaikh Ma'adhiif is the Shaikh of the Ruwala Sulubba.

291 The Sulubba women never veil and rarely wear a *milfa* over the
lower part of their faces. Hence in Najd they are at once recognisable.

535 They are very fond of dancing, and on any feast day or at a mar-
riage ceremony, the first thing they do is to organise a dance. This
takes the form of men and women dancing together (a highly dis-
graceful and unseemly thing among Arabs), at which the men every
now and then kiss their partners on the mouth and before the audience.

619 The Sulubba has among his ceremonies, dances, etc., the strange
custom of hoisting a cross made from two pieces of wood tied to-
gether in the form of a Christian emblem. It may be called his tribal
mark or standard.

545 Well-read Arabs, like Shaikh 'Abdullah Salim al Subah, cousin of
619 the Shaikh of Kuwait, and others, say quite definitely that the Sulubba
174 are descendants of the large number of Crusader camp followers, who
were taken captive during the Crusade and Saracen wars; that vast
numbers of these camp followers were taken in several great battles